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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes two joint sessions held by the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education to hear testimony on issues relevant to special education for Native American children. Issues and problems were in the areas of: (1) gifted and talented education, including lack of services due to financial problems or racial bias among educators, exclusion of gifted children from services due to culturally biased standardized tests, and parent participation; (2) education of handicapped and learning disabled students, including misdiagnosis of language problems as learning deficits and misdiagnosis and inappropriate placement of students who are performing poorly due to family problems or cultural barriers; (3) the shortage of Native special education teachers and the inaccessibility of teacher education programs to most reservation American Indians; and (4) difficulties with Bureau of Indian Affairs guidelines on exceptionality and standardized tests, and inadequate funding for textbooks. Also discussed were successful programs and strategies that motivate gifted students, provide a summer college experience for gifted students, provide handicapped students with peer helpers, expand accessibility of higher education for students with disabilities, and use local elders to help with exceptional children in the classroom. Recommendations are made for school improvement strategies. (SV)

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INAR/NACIE Joint Issues Sessions
NIEA 22nd Annual Conference - San Diego, California
October 15, 1990

"Education of Exceptional Children"

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INAR/NACIE Joint Issues Sessions
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Summary: "Education of Exceptional Children"

The first session on Education of Exceptional Children was co-hosted by INAR Task Force Co-Chair Terrel Bell and NACIE Council member Andrea Barlow. The second session on this issue was co-hosted by INAR Task Force member Hayes Lewis and NACIE Council member Margaret Nelson. The following issues, programs, and recommendations were discussed:

I. **Overview of the Issues**

- On the topic of education for exceptional Indian children there are many issues and concerns both in the tribal schools and in public schools. This is an area that has been virtually ignored in many school systems.

- In special education, one of the issues the Task Force has been hearing around the country is that the screening and assessment in order to place kids is inappropriate. We have heard that students with a variety of learning disabilities that might not have been special education in nature are erroneously placed in special education programs. Some of the problems are related to assessment instruments and some are related to language differences.

  We have also heard that there is a lack of training for special education people and a lack of training for parents in terms of their rights and responsibilities. We have heard a number of presentations about problems associated with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effect and their impact on school systems. In New Mexico, for example, the State Legislature had to fund preschool programs for three- and four-year-olds with a variety of disabilities and some of them are now coming out of the alcoholism of their parent during pregnancy.

  We have heard about the need for referral services and appropriate programs to meet the Native students' needs related to problems rooted in behavioral, cultural, or limited English proficiency and the need for periodic re-evaluation or testing to reconfirm earlier diagnosis.

  In terms of gifted and talented we are looking at models that really consider the special needs of Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

II. **Gifted and Talented**

Problems and Issues

- We need to have more Native American kids in these gifted programs, because people need to understand that we are not always in resource or special education classes. They have many ways to classify us as needing special education, but not very many ways to classify us as gifted and talented.

- I am from Santa Fe Public School District, and as an educator and as a parent of two gifted children, my own experience was that no services were available 12 or 13 years ago when my children were first identified as gifted. My oldest is a senior this year, but I noticed when he was little that he was reading way above his grade level. At five years old he was reading at second grade level. I went to the school and they could not provide him with any services. It

is frustrating for any parent to see that their child's needs are not being met by the school. Finally, I determined to pay for my own children's education and sent them to a prep school. So I ended up paying out of my own pocket for services that should have been provided by the public school.

- When I grew up the rule was, "Do as I say, not as I do." This doesn't work for these young people of today. So I feel it is vital to have programs to serve our Indian gifted children. Everyone thinks of Indian children as needing remedial kinds of programs. My son can do his math in front of the television watching cartoons and get it done very well. Many Indian people are gifted and should be acknowledged as such.

- Some kids are criticized by their teachers for "not paying attention," or "messing around." When my son was in third grade his teacher complained of this and said that he just doodled. He took a math test, and when he did well and didn't turn in a scratch paper, the teacher accused him of cheating. I told him to go back to school and tell the teacher to give him the test again. So he did and she gave him the test three times because she couldn't believe that he could work the answers in his head. She said that she couldn't work them without writing them out, but she did find out that he really had been listening. So from then on she let him doodle because she knew that he was listening. However, she said, "I don't know how to say he is gifted." And I thought to myself, "You're in a public school and you don't know how to say he's gifted?"

  He is also very talented in art. But what do you do when a teacher gives your child a D or an F. Her reason was that he didn't turn in all of his assignments. I questioned her and found out that he was turning in exactly what she had asked for, but she felt he was just sitting there and wasn't listening. But to give him an F? He knows he can draw. He won first prize in kindergarten and had his picture at the bank; he won first place in an art sculpture contest in sixth grade. He is talented and even did the cover for the yearbook. But his art teacher gave him an F.

- How do we keep identified gifted children engaged in classrooms where they are turned off by teachers who use processes designed to serve the slowest students in their classrooms? How can they possibly fully utilize their potential in these situations? I am of the opinion that what often happens with these kinds of government programs in Bureau schools, and almost everywhere, is that they are an afterthought and their implementation is based on availability of money. It is currently fashionable or in vogue for Indian people to be identified as being gifted.

- You know as parents we need to encourage our children because sometimes if you look at giftedness only in the school system, then what can happen is that system itself can create problems. If they have a program for gifted students, it is often a pull-out program where kids are taken out of the regular classroom when actually all kids need to be working together cooperatively, so everyone is sharing their gifts.

  Schools don't seem to have ways to identify different kinds of giftedness. They often only have two that they concentrate on, like verbalization and math, or art and music. In some programs for Indians there are survival skill giftedness and spiritual giftedness.

- I agree that it is really important to develop strategies that will impact children in the regular program. There is a tendency to pull out or segregate Indian students, but if these special programs include good practices for one group of children, why couldn't they be applied to all?

- I am a school board member in the White Shield School District in northwestern North Dakota. Our school serves about 156 students in grades K through 12. We have a gifted and talented program that we began implementing last year. The district advertised for people to nominate children into the program, but the problem is that a lot of parents and community members don't have any idea about gifted and talented youth. We know there are such children around, but for all these years we have been focusing on those children who are underachievers, handicapped, and so forth. The gifted kids have never received any attention or been encouraged to fully develop their talents.

  This is really sad because I had children and grandchildren who were really gifted. At one time they brought home a lot of high marks from school, but they learned that if they were good achievers they would be harassed at school, so they didn't want their peers to know about their good grades. The school talks about this, but they don't know what to do about it. There should be something we could do to stop this trend and turn these other kids around. Some parents, who had money or were in education and knew their child was gifted, would pull the children out of the school and send them to a white school.

  I have raised four grandchildren and they were all gifted and talented. They came to me when they were 6, 7, 8, and 9, and they had real good grades. But the oldest, who was in fourth grade, was so bored in school that he didn't do anything. He said everything they were studying he had done before. It did him a lot of damage. He graduated from White Shield High School and he hardly ever did his work, so he was really spoiled. He would never do his homework, but then he would take the test and get a good grade. After high school he went into the Marine Corps.

  My second granddaughter had straight As. She had some better teachers and they helped her out by giving her other things to do. So right now she is at the University of North Dakota. The next one is in the gifted program now.

- I am from the Billings Area Education Office. Working with gifted and talented programs is one of the "hats" I recently picked up. One of the things lacking in our area are the resources for assessments at the local level. We have three very small schools ranging in enrollment from 75 to 300 students. We don't have the additional resources from the Bureau's formula to go out and buy all of those expensive tests. I would like to see where we can go to get these resources without having to dig so deep financially.

- A problem with pulling out gifted kids is that this may place additional stresses on the children themselves. There may be parental and teacher pressure, and the testing process itself is rigorous. Then if you go through all of this and you fail, it is really going to affect your self-esteem.

- I would agree that it is a real challenge for students, and I think we need to help them see it as a challenge with themselves rather than a competition with other students. Perhaps that would be an incentive for them to be involved and it would produce less stress. It certainly can cause a lot of stress if they are not ready for it or if it isn't something they want. But we do need to get as many as we can involved in GATE programs and we need more role models.

- From a student perspective, my kids often ask, "Why should I work harder to get an A when Joe or someone else can easily get an A in the regular class?" That is a very interesting question, because probably everyone should have an IEP even though the teachers say it is too much paperwork. But this would mean that someone has to monitor it, and no one likes to be told what to do, including teachers.

As a member of a parent committee with the public schools, I have worked with Title IV, Title V, and JOM. One of the things I have found is that schools get a regular allotment for each student and then more money for special kids. This is an incentive to identify more students as gifted. We need to see what motives schools have in identifying kids for special programs. This is especially important when we know that 80 percent of Indian kids are going to public schools. Because if schools go out and rambunctiously grab all of these kids and identify them as gifted and then do not develop IEPs or try meet their special needs, we will have created a monster.

In New Mexico the funding formula for public schools does include an additional weighted factor for special education gifted students. But here again, the standards used for eligibility are geared to only one definition of gifted and talented. If your students don't meet those criteria, you won't get the money. So there is automatically no risk of overidentification for these programs.

Assessment Issues

I have a concern with Section 4 of the new gifted and talented guidelines. This is the "high potential" area. Sections 1 and 2 say that a child must score either in the 95th or 98th percentile on a standardized test or an IQ test. I don't believe that anyone in this room would be surprised to learn that those tests were not written for Indian children and not standardized for them. The assessment process of allowing our students to participate in the gifted and talented program would be laughable except that they are hurting our children by keeping them out.

We should have someone in the Indian Education Office who is concerned and knowledgeable about Indian education. They should not just be selecting a test that is used for white kids and bringing it out to an Indian boarding school. We need to fund a research project on how to best assess academic potential and recognize giftedness among Indian children--perhaps at a boarding school like Sherman Indian High School here at Riverside that has ties to the local universities.

One of the problems brought up by people in Albuquerque regarding the identification of GATE students was that use of the IQ test would eliminate minority students. But as I recall, after the program was instituted, minority participation went up, rather than down.

Although we agree that many Indian children are gifted, there are different models out there to recognize different areas of giftedness. It doesn't just depend on the IQ scores or test data. There are models of effective programs in Indian communities throughout the United States, but they are isolated. So they need support and recognition.

There is a program called the Renzuli Enrichment Triad Model out of the University of Connecticut that is very compatible with a number of ways that Indian people look at giftedness. The model assumes that every person is gifted, but in different areas and at different levels.

There are also other models that look at bilingual or bicultural kinds of giftedness that might be more appropriate to use rather than the strictly academic Anglo model that one finds used by many school systems. American Indian Research and Development, Inc. of Norman, OK, has developed a program that examines kinds of models that could be useful for Indian communities as they develop enrichment programs and programs for their gifted and talented children.

As we look at the needs of exceptional children, we need to take an almost holistic view and not be bound to one methodology or another. We must be willing to try to develop these kinds of programs and opportunities for students.

Programs and Strategies

I was on the parent committee at Albuquerque Public Schools several years ago. At that time the district served 86,000 students, of whom about 3.3 percent were American Indian. Albuquerque has had an active GATE program for about 16 years now. They hold all kinds of workshops and have guest speakers in and so forth. As a parent of two gifted children, I know they can be easily distracted. To keep them on task, you have to provide programs that are very interesting. I think we should look at programs that work, such as the one in Albuquerque, rather than try to create something entirely new.

I work at the University of California at Irvine and am currently on leave at Sherman Indian High School. During a summer program that was for gifted and talented at the university, three of us faculty members ran a guilt-trip on the university people asking, "What have you done for Indians and Indian children? We need to be involved in this and we need to bring in Indian students." So they brought in children from six other schools.

By these assessment guidelines--which are invalid to begin with--86 percent of our Indian students score in the lowest quartile. Yet I took 48 Sherman students to the university to participate in the summer GATE program. One of the college professors said, "Students can only participate in this if they are gifted and talented." So all of our Indian students go real bright-eyed, you know, and they said, "Oh, wow, you know, we're in the gifted and talented program now."

In the competition with the six other schools, our students scored second in the day's activities and they had not even had chemistry, biology lab, or many experiences the other students had. But the potential was there, and just the idea that they were in that environment and people were looking at them as if they belonged there raised their level of capability, and they won the second day's competition.

So you see, that is what labels will do for you. And just as that label is so powerful to help you, other labels can be equally powerful to hurt you. So I think we have used the negative labels long enough.

I am from an area in the San Bernardino mountains. I consider a lot of children in our reservation to be gifted and talented. There are children who are artistic, exceptional leaders, etc., and they don't ever get any recognition in the public school. All of the kids who are in the GATE program are children of teachers and businessmen. The same is true for the football team in our local high school.

My daughter started high school in our area last year and tried out for the volleyball team. She was very excited about going until about two weeks into the school year. She thought she had made the team and was happy and excited. She got the uniform and played in a game, and the next day the coach took it from her and told her she had no potential. That was the worst thing that ever happened to her. It almost destroyed her. I said, "How can they let a person work with children who would say a child has no potential?" Well, she immediately did not want to go to that school. Her brothers had been to Sherman and so she wanted to go there. So within two days, I had faxed her application down there and she was accepted. Since she has been at Sherman, she has been identified for the GATE program and was on

the Honor Roll all four semesters last year. She went to U.C. Irvine's program this summer and was so happy.

The other day we picked her up for homecoming and she had called all around to area florists because the school had given her $15 to buy flowers for the homecoming queen and seven princesses. She said, "A lot of these people don't like Indians." She finally found a florist who donated a dozen red roses, a half dozen white roses for two runner-ups, and carnations for the rest. She was so happy and said, "I feel so good about myself!"

So Sherman has really been good for her. I am proud of the direction this school has taken in creating a new path for Native American children to follow and in recognizing their gifts and talents.

Parental Influence and Involvement

- I have two sons who are gifted. I think all parents probably believe that their children are gifted and if they don't, they should start thinking that way. Parents who believe this can encourage those strengths their children have and help them develop their talents. It doesn't have to come only from the school and other people.

- I have been reading the research on what causes students to do exceptionally well in school and have recently read a book by Dr. Guy Odom in Houston. He points to the mother as the most influential factor and says that if the mother has a dominant personality and is strong willed, the child is going to do well in school. Does this have any bearing on the experiences of Indian children?

- It sounds like the control group may have been in the majority society. I have raised six grandchildren. Three kids were never with the mother because of her problems with drugs and alcohol. So the influential factors for them were between foster homes and grandmother. But, you know, the minute they are born, they start learning stuff. I got them when the little guy was three years old. So there were three of the most influential years when they had other experiences. I had goals for the children that worked and they had good grades and did really well in school.

- I have an example. I happen to have been at the same job for quite a while now, and when I first got the job--teaching in the Indian Studies Department--a mother came and began school because her daughter was just not directed. So she said, "Let's me and you both go to school." Also when the daughter would act up, the grandmother would come and sit, so the daughter would behave, because the mother did not have that much control. Now that young girl is grown up and she has a son. I was talking to her mother the other day and she says that now she goes over to sit with her grandson, Devin, because he won't listen to his mother.

- I know of students who are gifted and talented people and live in a dysfunctional home all their lives. They still come out of there and earn a doctorate in education. I don't know how they learned the moral part and the values coming out of that setting, but somehow they were determined to get out of that place and they were determined to get a good education.

- One woman friend went to Adult Children of Alcoholics, and she is finally learning to cope and to live her life and to take a look at where she came from. It is not only Indian families that are dysfunctional, but when you take the dominant society and run a test on them, it has nothing to do with how our people are.

- The parents should be educated to know more about gifted and talented children and to know what they are doing in the program and how they can help.

III. **Handicapped and Learning Disabled**

Problems and Issues

- There are other kinds of exceptional children other than gifted and talented. I grew up on the reservation in the State of Washington several years ago--I have a lot of gray hair now. But in those days it was kind of a mill, where they brought Indian kids and then pushed them out at the end. My brother was dyslexic and he was what we call "dumb Tom." He still has these problems. But 30 years ago teachers identified him as a problem and set him on the side so they could teach to the rest of the kids. They promoted him socially, and this was very bad.

  There is no excuse for this nowadays; yet I was on the reservation in Nebraska two years ago and saw that the same kind of thing was still taking place. Teachers who are certified in the state should not look at these kids as problems; they should have a professional view and try to do a professional job of serving their needs. So I am very concerned about the problem with pushouts. People also say that the reservation only attracts marginal teachers, and this also needs to be examined.

- For about 95 percent of my career I have been working on the Navajo and Gila River Reservations, and I just moved into the public school for the first time. I find it a lot more structured than the BIA and tribal schools. My main concern is about the Indians themselves labeling students. When I was on the Navajo Reservation, when they found kids who were having trouble or had discipline problems, they would immediately refer them to special education. I am totally against that. Another problem with the BIA is that the paperwork is horrendous, especially filling out the IEPs. It is just too much and it takes away all your quality time with the children.

- It also makes me angry when I find Indian teachers who don't want to deal with the students in their classrooms, but just want to get rid of them. They see that as the easy way out. I am a special educator, and I am struggling to keep those students in the classes.

  On the reservation they segregate the students in the buildings. They keep them in the background. I have also taught at Hunters Point Boarding School. My mother is a Chapter 1 reading specialist. Her kids are not even in the classrooms. They are kept in the dorms and that is where she teaches. Her classroom is very tiny. At Gila River Day School the special education program was segregated in a very tiny classroom and you felt as if you were an alien. I was treated like a wall, with no respect at all--people just passed me by.

Assessment Issues

- One of the areas of concern that was identified in other hearings was that Native American kids seem to be identified for special education without any real criteria other than their problems with the English language. Language assessments of different kinds are really needed for use with Native students in order to distinguish between language problems and learning deficits.

- In Alaska, English is now the dominant language for most families. But some Eskimo groups and people farther north are less acculturated. They live out in remote areas in the bush. They still have their language and it is pretty strong. Even in Southeast Alaska among the Tlingit, they are finding that there is still a dialect. The difference in dialect between people in the village and those in town is further emphasized by differing speech patterns. Even people who have learned English often use their Native thought processes and formulate their speech accordingly. So many kids in Alaska have been identified as having speech problems when, in fact, it is really just a dialect problem. Speech therapists have indicated that there is no good way for them to tell the difference between dialect and speech problems. So they are looking for answers and for help. They are conscientious and don't feel good about seeing kids who don't really belong in there.

- My daughter was placed in special education because they thought she had a speech problem. When she was 17 she asked if she could take the test to see if she could graduate, and she scored above average. So there needs to be a better way of screening and testing kids to identify them for these programs. Also, a lot of the counselors and teachers make referrals but won't test kids to be certain. This is bad because some of these kids could do so much better, but they aren't given the chance.

- They ought to do placement tests periodically to be sure that kids are placed at the proper levels because some of them may have been held back due to excessive absences or problems with their family situation. They are actually smart but they are being held back.

- I think that those assessments teachers use in their classrooms are really a form of control or discipline. If you don't do all of the things that the teacher wants you to do, yet you are capable of absorbing the information, comprehending it, and doing well, then that suggests there should be some alternative assessment to measure that competence or mastery.

- One of the things that happens in the Juneau School District is that kids I work with can test very high on standardized and IQ tests in the early grades, but after a few years things start to happen. A lot of it has to do with social issues like drugs, alcohol, economics, and lack of parental support. So when they get into fourth, fifth, and sixth grades where they need even more support, they begin to lose interest and fall behind. The schools are usually too big to provide any kind of support for them. When schools and classes are smaller, teachers can have more time to give students the support and encouragement that they may not get at home. Then they may have a better chance of staying in school longer. This is what happened to me. I didn't get support at home, but because I went to a small school, I got some support there and made it through fine.

- On the Navajo Reservation I know many kids were put in special education because of standardized testing that did not take into consideration the living situations of their families. There are still many families on the reservation who do not have running water and electricity. How do you explain the use of a refrigerator to five-year-old children who have never had one in their home? They don't even know what an ice cube tray is, and yet these things are on the test.

My mother and I talked just this past weekend and I asked how her students fared on the CTBS. She said, "How would you figure this one child who scored exceptionally high, in the 90th percentile, but can't read at all?" What kids do is make pretty patterns. Some go straight down on one side or the other; other students make zig zags. They don't understand testing, so what can you do?

So when it comes to assessment for placement in special education, we need more than just standardized tests. We need parental and teacher feedback. Principals need to get out into the classrooms and observe kids instead of sitting in their offices. We also need to have better qualified teachers. Even when you have established procedures, they are often bypassed because no one is monitoring.

- When you get a child in special education, you realize that you are going to help that child, but you also have to look at the long-term effect of the child's placement in your program. I have a student right now in the Phoenix Union High School District, who has been learning disabled throughout her entire 17 years of schooling. However, she has been put in classes for "Trainable Mentally Handicapped" (TMH) and she has picked up those characteristics. They just recently re-evaluated her and found she was LD, so she is now facing a serious crisis and she is an alcoholic.

I am fighting with the tribe, the state, and the school to get her moved into a residential home. The tribe doesn't want to bother with her because she lives in the urban area. The state doesn't want to bother with her because she belongs to the Navajo Tribe. The school district won't pay because they feel it is the tribe's responsibility. I go back to the tribe and I am running around in circles. How am I going to get this girl into residential treatment?

- In the case of this girl who was misdiagnosed as TMH, there is really no argument that the total responsibility and liability rest with the school district. Parental and student legal rights should be clear in this case. If that child were in our district and we couldn't provide the appropriate services, we would have to place the child where she could get the services she required. If we were unwilling or unable to pursue that course, then there would be legal recourse that the parents could pursue to require us to pay for those costs and also for any kind of ancillary services for assessment or other things needed by that child.

The special education laws are probably the most controlled areas of the school system, and if you follow them you can stay out of trouble. They also assure that children will get the kinds of services they deserve and need.

- I think this one particular girl has chosen a career for me. Next year I am quitting work and I'm going to go into law. When I finish, I am coming back to the reservation and start legal procedures and litigation against those who are not serving Indian students properly.

<u>Programs and Strategies that Work</u>

- I have taught at the University of Oklahoma for 21 years and I know that we welcome handicapped and special needs students, as do other universities. We have a mandate that they must be educated the same as other students and this sometimes does create special problems for the professor or the teacher. For instance, they must decide what to do for students who cannot complete a test in the allotted 50-minute time period. However, if handicapped students go to their professors and explain their needs, almost without exception they will be given additional time. The teacher just has to know the problem.

I had a colleague who had a student last summer who could not write or speak. How do you test this kind of student? He was there and could listen and participate mentally, but my friend was very puzzled about how to evaluate him. He had a tutor and an assistant, but the teacher was not sure how to judge whether the answers he gave were his own or the tutor's.

- I work for the University of California at Berkeley. We have a special program for handicapped and disabled people. Students with special needs just have to go to the disabled center on campus and they are given someone to take notes, or to assist them in their living. A student is assigned to them either as a volunteer or for credit. They get registered and they can also take a note to the professor of any class they attend and they will be given extra time to take tests or other considerations they may need. We had one students who couldn't write or speak and was dyslexic, so he was provided with a computer to help him get through school. Others have electronic equipment that allows them to spell out an answer. It takes a long time and sometimes the professor will revise the test questions.

- Handicapped youngsters in elementary, junior high, and high school are often assigned peer helpers to take them around to their classes. This is a valuable experience for both students.

- In our special education programs at Zuni, we use the elderly citizens from a senior citizens' center to come in and provide assistance to the teacher in the classroom. I think they bring a humanizing perspective that is slightly different based on their age and life experiences. They also have a real calming effect on hyperactive kids or those who are severely disabled in other ways. So there are many resources we can use to help our exceptional kids.

- I worked for about seven years on the Gila River Indian Reservation which is the Pima Reservation. Their program is one I would call a model program that people could look at. The director, Cecilia Braun, is excellent. Her program serves the entire reservation and is staffed with psychologists, a speech pathologist, a special educator, and other community people who work as paraprofessionals. We provided whatever services or help a child needed. We even brought in people from Phoenix.

<u>Parental Involvement</u>

- Another concern I have is that the parent or the parent designee be involved in the IEP process at the boarding school site. There are no funds for parents to travel in and out to participate in the IEP process. So I want it to be published in everything going to the family so that the parents can designate a representative to speak on behalf of the child's best interests. They can ask the child who they would like to speak for them, because sometimes the school will make the choice. But if the parent could talk to the child and say, "Okay, you are going to have a hearing or a meeting, and I can't be there. So who at the school would you like to come in and be the parent designee? I will call the school and name that person."

I also believe that our parents need to be educated clearly about their roles, because parent involvement in the IEP is basic to everything.

- I am in special education and I work with a lot of non-Indians. One of the areas I hope you will include is advocacy for parents and children locally. In our area we have advocates, but most are non-Indians. When our Indian people have problems with the system it is almost as if they advise us not to tell these parents exactly what they can get. They give parents a thick booklet with all of this formal language and tell them that it explains what is available.

- Often in our area Indian kids are put in special education classes because of speech and language problems. Our community is English speaking--in fact, not many people speak Mandan any more because it is almost dead, and there are only about five people left who know it. But still they don't have this trust. We are a small group and many of our people don't trust the non-Indian, so they want to depend on an Indian person to be their advocate.

If we could develop training programs for our Indian parents to help them be better advocates for their children, it would be really helpful.

- When you talk about the multidisciplinary team coming in to make up the IEP, that is just a farce. I never see that. You bring in the teachers, the principal, and the parents. I am trying to run the meeting so the parents will understand; we have parents coming in from very traditional families, not understanding what is going on in the school. Here all these teachers and administrators are talking way over their heads. These people sign off on papers without even knowing what they are signing. I get so angry when I see this.

- This varies from district to district. In Zuni we require a Zuni language speaker to be there with the parents. I have sat in on these meetings as a principal. In one case, I was hearing what was going on and the special education teacher was really trying to force a decision on the parents without giving them a chance to respond. So finally I spoke to the parents in Zuni and explained what was actually being discussed and that they had a right to accept that option or we could develop another recommendation if they preferred. They wouldn't accept the decision being forced on them and when the teacher kept pushing, I called for a recess. Then I took the teacher aside and talked with her. But you don't find that kind of process across the board.

IV. **Teacher Training**

- One of the problems we are also facing in Montana is the isolation factor. We need a lot of good in-service at the local level for our teachers and our parents, especially regarding students' self-expectations regardless of whether they are exceptional, gifted, or average. We need to cultivate the type of behavior where all students are giving the best they have to offer. We are working with Eastern Montana State, but one of the schools that I service is 80 miles away from Eastern, so we can get out there one day a week if we are lucky. Also, after teaching all day, it is hard for us to sit from 4:00 to 7:00pm.

- I don't know about anyone else, but I really wanted to be in special education and had to go all the way to Penn State to do it. If anyone says that getting a masters degree is easy, they are lying. I am not married and I don't have any kids and have been out of the city for a number of years, so it was hard for me to go back East. How can you expect someone from the reservation or a local community to go that far to get an education and then come back to be with their people? It is hard. I almost gave up at the end because I was so homesick. So I wish they had more special education training programs near or around universities and communities. We also need more programs to train paraprofessionals.

- I am on the faculty of University of California in Irvine, and we have a partnership between the Chancellor and President of the university and Joe Frazier, the Principal of Sherman Indian High School. Under this agreement, I am released half-time to support an on-site effective school program and teacher training. Training is currently focusing on process and not product. This is part of the state teacher training mandate. Teacher credentialling is driven by legislation, not by the community, and the legislation in California is toward process oriented, cognitive approaches that emphasize higher levels of critical thinking.

  On the down side, we don't attract enough Indians to the university. This is my 18th year at UC Irvine, and in that time we have had 10 or fewer Indian students come through teacher training. That just isn't enough. They want to go to higher paying jobs if they come to the university. They are highly recruited and given scholarships to do other things because

teaching is a credential program, not a degree program. There is no money for non-degree programs. So we can't go out and recruit people and say "Here is money to come and be a teacher." We can't compete with engineering or the corporations who offer scholarships in exchange for students' commitments to come to work for them for five years. So we are not attracting the best and brightest. However we are attracting a very good level of students; we have not accepted a student with a GPA under 3.4 since I have been in my department. But our numbers are small and very few minorities are attracted.

This year at UC Irvine I think we probably have 41 Indian students and they are very highly courted. Education has the least money to offer as enticement and after graduation salaries and social status rewards are not as high as they are in other fields.

I think partnerships are the answer to bringing in more creative teaching. We must build partnerships between local universities and school districts for teacher and student exchanges so that new ideas are brought in, and also new training approaches. It is hard with teachers who have been around for years. I love old teachers and I plan to be one and I don't want anyone coming around and telling me I have been around too long. New teachers have plenty to learn from old teachers on management skills and transitional activities, but new teachers also have a lot to offer veteran teachers. So I believe that partnerships are the answer. They are working in southern California. We even have some three-point partnerships between the local schools, the university, and corporations.

V. Regulatory Issues

- I have a question about the BIA guidelines on exceptionality. In public schools you can have a director/teacher, or a coordinator/teacher; that seems to be the best, most logical policy, especially in small, isolated, rural schools. My concern is that the BIA guidelines need to be really clear about the possibility of combining positions like that in regard to both gifted and talented programs and those for learning disabled. If you can only have the program if you have both a coordinator and a teacher, then there isn't enough money to meet the needs of the children, because you can't afford two salaries with the money that is sent by the government. If this combining of positions is not allowed, I would recommend such a change for small rural and boarding schools.

- I am concerned with the guidelines for the GATE programs, because we are just adopting them out of the dominant society and using them with our Indian children. We need to have something unique for Indian students.

- We really need to be concerned about the assessment tools correlating with our curriculum. I know that the BIA requires the California Achievement Test (CAT) to be the standardized test across its system. The CAT is based on the California state framework and the curriculum and textbooks adopted in California. The BIA does not have its schools on a textbook cycle, and the schools are not necessarily required to be accredited through the Western Accreditation Association. So the CAT has very little relationship to the curriculum our children are learning in school.

  As a result, we had only four students who scored above the 90th percentile on the CAT. When they have never been exposed to that material, they have to be absolute geniuses to score that high. Yet they can't qualify for GATE unless they are in the 95th to 98th percentile.

The whole thing is not thought through very well. I would like the BIA to look at why its schools are not on the textbook cycle. The reason is because no Impact Aid goes to the State Department of Education for BIA schools. In our area Impact Aid money goes to Indian people on El Toro Marine Base and not to those who attend Sherman Indian High School. Children at the marine base get their money through the State Department of Education and so they get state-adopted textbooks at reduced rates and are on the state cycle. With Sherman Indian School in Riverside, the BIA says, "We don't want to pay ourselves Impact Aid money," or "We don't want to pay the state Impact Aid money for a BIA school," so Sherman is not on the cycle and doesn't get the textbooks. I would assume the same is true in every state where there are BIA residential schools.

I therefore recommend that a contract be established between the BIA and the State Departments of Education so that Impact Aid money could go to all Indian schools through the states and they could get up-to-date texts.

Just for clarity, the textbook cycle is implemented over an eight year-period, so that one year they buy math books, the next year science, and so forth. This cycle completely missed Indian children. There is nothing in the BIA budget that is designated for textbooks, only the per child allotment, and this is insufficient. It means you are in a position of having to choose between feeding kids, providing a counselor, or having current textbooks. Sherman Indian School's per pupil allocation is less than nearby Huntington Beach where students are only in school for six hours a day. Yet we have the students on a 24-hour basis and have to provide three meals a day and residential counselors. What necessary service are we going to deny to get textbooks? Not only that, but state-adopted textbooks cost about one-third of the texts that the Indian school could buy directly because of reduced rates.

- One problem with this suggestion is that state education departments get caught in a bind on Impact Aid because they don't want the federal government supervising, and yet there can be a lot of loopholes and in times past the auditor's office has uncovered some scandalous things. For instance, one program had arranged for the man that drove the Coca Cola truck to be there on Tuesday if that was the day to count eligible students. Anyway, if you ask the state department to do this, they will go to their legislature and request money to hire people to administer the funds. State legislators will say that it is federal business and the federal government should put up the money. Then you have to go back to Congress and plead with them to allow some of the Impact Aid money to be set aside for administrative costs and so the amount gets slimmed down and the money does not reach the children it is designed to assist.

VI. School Improvement Strategies

- I think the transition from elementary to intermediate level is really an important transition for young people. We have been looking at this for several years at Zuni and trying to determine what needs to be done to deal with these issues. We see a rise in negative socialization. We see students not being able to pick up the subject matter. And we see teachers not having enough time to teach because they are coming from a self-contained situation to almost a shot-gun approach with seven-period schedules and only limited time to concentrate on an area.

- At this transition point kids begin to segregate themselves, whereas in the earlier years kids intermingle more. This is especially true where Native American students are minorities in public schools. As young children they can have friends who are non-Native, but by the time

they are older, Native kids seem to gravitate toward the back of the room, as if they have figured out that is their place. So we need to figure out ways to help these kids feel like they belong up front and in the middle as well as in the back. Teachers could influence this by looking at the physical environment in their classrooms and mixing it up a bit more.

Of course this is a process that goes way back and continues on even in college. When I was a Native student in college, we segregated ourselves because we felt more comfortable among ourselves and with other Indians from Navajo, Pueblo, or Sioux groups.

- I have just joined the Santa Barbara Urban Indian Health Project as the education coordinator. I have also recently completed a step my Indian educator friends recommended I take years ago--a Ford Foundation-sponsored program in holistic education. I feel that this process-oriented framework that they advocate is what we need so much.

This past summer I taught creative writing for the UCSB Upward Bound Program; we had one Navajo student and the rest were Black and Chicano. With my Montessori training and now my masters in holistic education, I am convinced that teachers can create positive classroom environment with a certain basic ingredients. If you don't have much money, you don't need textbooks.

If teachers can facilitate helping students identify their current interests and integrate writing with speaking, then students can work in areas where they will be personally motivated to read and focus their concentration. This is as true for native English speakers as it is for those children who are learning English as a second language. (I also have a TESL certificate.) We talk, talk, talk, and most of us write about five minutes a day if we do any at all. So we need to emphasize writing more strongly in a non-compulsory and encouraging setting.

You have to trust children to discover their own interests and learning processes. As the teacher you have to facilitate this discovery and then the development of their skills as the students pursue their interests. You and the child set goals and this is where the grade comes from. We are traditionally so product-oriented, we break the children in the process of getting the grade on the product. Although I agree that there has to be a product, if it is based on individual interests, the product will come.

How would we go about training teachers to use this approach? I think we have to use programs like those in our county and our community college, where high school students who might want to teach are recruited early. Then they can begin to be trained in this holistic process. But we can't wait for this to generate new teachers--we also must work on our local credentialling programs, so that teacher training programs are changed.

- I agree that it is easier to teach creative writing without textbooks, but it is not easy to teach science, physics, chemistry, and biology. For these subjects you must have textbooks and adequate funding.

VII. Dealing with Dropouts

- There has been a lot of effort in our local school districts to curb the high school dropout factor. Most of the schools are now provided with counselors.

For White Shield we have one juvenile officer who lives in Newtown, which is 70 miles away and another in Mandaree which is 60 miles from Newtown and across the river. The officer who lives in Newtown is supposed to take care of all the kids in our area. There is a law on the reservation that kids have to stay in school until they are 18, but how is anyone going to keep track of this when the one juvenile officer is so far away? You can make all the laws in the world, but if you don't enforce them they are meaningless. A lot of these kids just quit school and drop out.

The juvenile officer makes it down there about every two weeks, and by that time the kids are so far behind it is almost too late. How are you going to get them back in there and get them caught up?

- Extra-curricular activities offer something else to tie students into the school besides just academics. If you don't fit in in terms of academics--like many of our students--there are also clubs, band, music, and other afterschool activities where you can feel like you belong to the school community. Then you will be more interested in school because there is something there for you to do that you enjoy.

VIII. Other Issues

- We have some teachers in our elementary school who have been there for 30 years. But when we get to the high school there is a big teacher turnover and it is hard to get staff. Right now we don't have a counselor. We haven't had a counselor for six years because it is so isolated out there. We have tried everything including offering $5,000 over their normal salary, and we still can't get anyone. There are no towns around there--you have to drive some 70 miles to find a place where you can shop.

- We have an alcohol and drug program now at White Shield School staffed by a drug and alcohol counselor, who is the only person we have working as any kind of counselor. This is really penalizing the kids because they get no support services and no college counseling.